

Contributions.

The Commission vs. Denominationalism.

VI.
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As we pursue the study of the Commission, we find no truth more clearly and constantly affirmed by Christ and his Apostles, than in the language of Paul, "That Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3). Let us, then, consider the fact of the atonement, the one foundation truth of our hope and rejoicing in God, according to Paul, for, "We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the redemption" (Romans v. 11).

Jesus emphasizes this sublime truth in the commission in the statement, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations" (Luke xxiv. 47). Hence, Jesus affirms that the Scriptures declare the necessity of his sufferings and death for more redemption. And the voice of the prophets give unmistakable testimony respecting the necessity and purpose of his sacrifice. Listen to Isaiah.

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." "And he shall bear their iniquities." "He bore the sin of many," etc. In harmony with this testimony, the angel said to Joseph, "It is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21), and John declared him to be "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29).

Jesus said of himself, "I lay down my life for the sheep" (ch. x. 11, 15). Again, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). So vital to our redemption, therefore, did the Lord consider this truth, that he gave the institution of the Lord's Supper, to proclaim for all time, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28). And the testimony of the Holy Spirit through the apostles, everywhere, is to the same effect, as follows: "Him did God exalt, with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins" (Acts v. 31). "Feed the church of the Lord, which he purchased with his own blood" (ch. xv. 28). In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph. i. 7). "Even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell" (ch. v. 2). "Who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. ii. 6). "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquities" (Titus ii. 14). "When he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 7). "Who needeth not daily, like those high priests to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people, for thus he did once for all, when he offered up himself" (ch. vii. 27). "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself, without blemish, unto God, cleanse your conscience," etc. (ch. ix. 14). "But he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God" (ch.

x. 12). "By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (v. 10). "But through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (ch. ix. 12). "But now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (v. 26). "So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many," etc., (v. 28). "Ye were redeemed . . . with precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" (1 Peter, i. 18, 19). "Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree" (ch. ii. 24). "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (ch. iii. 18). "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (Col. i. 14). "And the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John, i. 7). "And apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22).

These, I may say, are but a few of the many clear, positive portions of Scripture which show the reasons why "The Christ should suffer." But this most sacred truth, this only foundation for the hope of salvation from sin and death, so graciously given to our lost race, has not escaped the assaults of humanisms?

The Ency. R. K. (Art. Socinianism), says, "Their doctrine respecting the atonement is, that God requires no consideration or condition of pardon, but the repentance of the offender, and that, consequently, the death of Christ was no real sacrifice for sin." "They assert that the only objects of his mission were to teach the efficacy of repentance, without any proper atonement for sin as a means of restoring us to the Divine favor" (ital. mine). And Mr. Dewey says: "Two leading views of the sacrifice of Christ divide the Christian world. The one regards it as an expedient, the other as a manifestation. According to the first view, the sacrifice is usually represented either as the suffering of a penalty, or as the payment of a debt, or as the satisfaction of a law. It is something that either turns God's favor towards us, or makes it proper for him to show favor. It is some new element, or some new expedient introduced into the divine government, without which it is impossible to obtain forgiveness. The other view regards the suffering of Christ as simply a manifestation. It is not a purchase or procurement, but a manifestation of God's love and pity and willingness to forgive." "Now the view of manifestation is the one which we adopt." Again, "They (the orthodox) still proceed, it is true, upon the presumption that this manifestation was intrinsically necessary, that sin could not have been forgiven without it; that the authority of God's law could not have been otherwise upheld. I certainly cannot take this view of the subject" (ital. mine) (Dewey's works, vol. iii., p. 78, 79). And Mr. Dewey, no doubt, speaks the sentiments of the Unitarian body generally on this question of the atonement, and as are expressed in the Ency. of Relig. Knowledge, as referred to above.

2. The regnant authority of Jesus the Christ is a truth most plainly taught in the commission. Our Lord, conscious of the fulfillment of the prophecy that "The government shall be upon his shoulders" (Isa. ix. 6), announces, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." And in the exercise of his regal power, therefore, commanded his ambassadors to "make disciples of all the nations," and pronounced condemnation upon all who should reject his authority, and refuse to be his subjects. In the immediate prospect of his death, resur-

rection, ascension and coronation" at the right hand of God," he answered Pilate, "Thou sayest it, for I am a King" (John xviii. 37). The government of the kingdom of heaven is an absolute monarchy. There is no limit to the king's power. The "all authority" claimed by Jesus embraces this absolute kingly authority. It cannot fall below this. It is certain, therefore, that Christ claimed to possess the government of the kingdom of heaven when he thus commissioned his disciples. But it is also certain that no one who is simply heir to the throne, possesses all the authority that belongs to that throne. This Jesus positively did claim. He was not, then, simply the heir to the throne, but possessor of it. But further, if Jesus of Nazareth is not king now, with all authority, the time will never come when he can be, for the time will never come when he will possess greater authority, than he now has, for he now has "all," and cannot have more than this. In this sense, namely, of supreme owner and ruler of the kingdom of heaven, the Holy Spirit declared through the apostles, "That God hath made him both Lord and Christ" (Acts ii. 36), and in proof of this he quotes and applies the prophecy of David as then fulfilled, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," for he thus applies the language of the prophet in which this declaration is found (Psalm ii.), to Christ and his church (Acts iv. 25-28), and with this, as to point of time, again the prophecy of Daniel (ii. 44), "In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." "The days of those kings" were the latter days of the Roman Empire, as is shown from the fact that the kingdom of God, represented by "the stone cut out of the mountain without hand," "smote the image upon his feet" (v. 34), yet "it broke in pieces," and would "consume all these kingdoms" (v. 44), represented by "the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold" (v. 45). Now, it is simply a matter of history that the great Western Empire came to an end, fell to rise no more, in 476 A. D., when Romulus Augustus, its last emperor, fell, and Odoacer became king of Italy. And as early as 305 A. D., Constantine, a professed Christian, sat upon the throne of the Roman Empire.

The fact that the kingdom of Jesus Christ, set up in the days of the Caesars, did overthrow the great politico-pagan institution of universal empire, which took its rise in the golden reign of the Babylonish king, and continued till 476 A. D., is plainly a matter of history.

Another important fact must be mentioned here, namely, that Jesus committed to his own ambassador, Peter, the opening of his kingdom. Said Christ, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19). Now, if Christ's kingdom was not established during the apostolic ministry, it was not opened by the apostle to whom alone was given the right to open it, and the kingdom is yet locked up. Nor is there any promise that it ever will be opened. The truth is, that Peter used the keys committed to him and opened the kingdom to both the Jews and the Gentile world. And in doing so he was careful to announce the supreme regal power of Jesus to both. Unto the Jews he said: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified;" and to the Gentiles he declared that "He is Lord of all" (Acts ii. 36 and x. 36).

In proof of this fact also, he appealed to the utterances of David, who, "being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne, he foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of the Christ" (Acts ii. 30-36). And some thirty or more years after Peter had declared that Jesus was both ruler and possessor of the kingdom, Paul wrote to the church of Colosse as follows: "Giving thanks unto the father, . . . who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love," etc. (ch. i. 12, 13). The kingdom of Jesus was a fact, then, when Paul wrote, A. D. 64, and John writing thirty years later, considered himself also in the kingdom at that writing, for he wrote, "I, John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus" (Rev. i. 9). He also states that "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth, . . . made us a kingdom, priests unto his God and father" (Rev. i. 5, 6). We notice once more the application which the apostle makes of David's prophecy, with respect to Christ (Heb. 1st ch.). After quoting David, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee," he shows that the prophecy, in point of time, refers to the resurrection and ascension of Christ, for it was "when he again bringeth the first-born into the world" that he saith, "and let all the angels of God worship him," and "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." "God, thy God, hath anointed thee . . . above thy fellows"—Melchizedek, Aaron, Moses and David.

In harmony with this application of David's language to the reign of Jesus Christ, during the present age, the same apostle in his letter to the Corinthian Church, says of "Christ, the first-fruits of the resurrection," "He must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet," and that this will take place "at his coming," and "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (1 Cor. xv. 20, 23, 25). Clear it is, then, that when the Christ comes again, it will not be to enter upon his reign, to take his kingdom, but to deliver it up to the Father.

But all this was declared by Christ himself to his apostles, in the 25th of Matthew: "He shall come in his glory," and he shall "sit on the throne of his glory." "Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," etc. Again, it was declared by the prophet, "And he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne" (Zech. vi. 13), and the apostle says that Jesus has "become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek," who was "king of Salem, priest of God most high" (Heb. vi. 20, vii. 1). He is, therefore, both king and priest upon his throne. He is our "Great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the son of God;" "a high priest who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," etc. He is "Far above all rule, and authority, and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come;" and he (the Father) "put all things in subject under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 20-23). All this was done "when he raised him from the dead and made him to sit at

his right hand in the heavenly places"

Now, it is well known that the fact of Christ's present reign and present existence of his kingdom is stoutly denied by some of his professed followers. Let the following utterances suffice as a sample of much that might be given on the side of the opposition, to this sublime truth, that, "Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a prince ("leader, founder") and Saviour" (Acts v. 31). I quote from J. B. Cook's "Review" of Dr. Wayland's sermon, "The Apostolic Ministry." He says: "The suffering Messiah has been, the king must yet be." Again, "Yet the number and clearness of the prophecies concerning the actual (referring to the future) reign and kingdom of Messiah, are to those which foretell his sufferings, about as ten to one." "If there be such a golden age . . . then it must transpire in the manner and by the agency of Messiah in his second advent." "The apostolic ministry, therefore, preached the 'kingdom of God'; they proclaimed the gospel as the good news or joyful message that an heavenly kingdom will come . . . of this kingdom, the first advent of Messiah is the earnest." "He," Dr. Wayland, "assume the reign or kingdom to have already come, and that we only labor to extend it." "If so, he overlooks the Lord's prayer, 'Thy kingdom come;' he overlooks the oft repeated prophecies and parables, which place the kingdom at and after his return" (ital. mine). "The great salvation, the restitution, the kingdom, depend on the second intervention of Messiah, as the atonement did on the first" . . . "He will be a great king, reigning in righteousness" (ital. mine). "Then all the prerogatives of sovereignty are his; he will take to himself his great power, and reign . . . in the kingdom of God." "So it is certain that there can be no divine kingdom to bless the world till the king, Messiah, comes." "Each evangelist, each sermon and epistle of the apostolic ministry, speaks of the Christ, or his coming as king."

"The apostles place the next age and not this, in subjection to Jesus (Heb. ii. 5, 8). Then he locates the new covenant with Israel and Judah" (pp. 5, 6, 10, 11, 17, 20, 43, 44, 62, 70). One quotation more from another work, "The Sanctuary of the Bible," must suffice. This writer, speaking of the judgment, says: "The Son of God is no longer needed as a great high priest. He therefore ceases from the office forever, and becomes a king for the deliverance and glorification of his people." I wish to lay before the reader the teachings of the divine commission in clear contrast with denominational opinion. In the case before us, the attempt is made (charity presumes unwittingly), to rob the Lord Jesus Christ of his glory and supreme royal authority, as now the possessor and ruler of his kingdom. Let the reader judge of the applicability of the prophet's language, "Will a man rob God: yet ye rob me."

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